

An Essay read in the Church of Christ at the Conference held on Sunday, Decr 27th 1888 at The Conference Hall, Jan. 1889

THE CHURCH CONFERENCE.

No. I.

JANUARY,

1889.

Seventh Conference.

PROGRAMME FOR CHURCH CONFERENCE.

The next meeting of the Church Conference will be held in Christ Church on April 25th.

At 10 o'clock, a. m., the Holy Eucharist will be celebrated.

1st—Subject: How can we make our Sunday School more successful?

2d—Subject: How can we induce our people to contribute more liberally to the support of their Pastor and to Parish expenses?

RECESS.

Reports of committees and other business.

3d—Subject: How to infuse life, earnestness and enthusiasm into a Parish.

The Church Extension Fund.

When this fund was started in 1888, we had but six church buildings within the bounds of our Conference. Now we have seven, and the eighth will be finished long before the Conference meets at Christ Church. We need several more churches, and if we can get all church people to contribute one cent a week to this fund we will soon have a dozen churches. Each church in our Conference will be twice as strong when it feels that it is backed by eleven others than it was when it had only five others like it in our district. By having more churches we will not only keep our members who live far from any church from straying off, but will draw many people to the Church. A good many feel that they had better give what they can to their own congregations where so much is needed. Those who know their Bible know better. It teaches that for congregations as well as individuals, "it is better to give than to receive." Such giving draws down our Lord's blessing, and that strengthens them at home and makes the congregation grow. Besides we have got far enough to see that the more a church gives to this fund the more it gives for work at home. Let every churchman in our Conference have his name on the roll of the Church Extension Fund when the Conference meets at

Christ Church. We hope then and there to decide where to build a church in the country this year. If every church sends her full contribution in April, we ought to have this church up by the time the Eighth Conference meets. That will make nine churches for us.

The Church Pic-Nic.

The Salisbury Branch of the St. Andrews Brotherhood, propose that all our churches have a pic-nic for big folks and little ones this summer, so that we all can get together. It has been suggested that this pic-nic be on July 4th. The matter will come up at our next Conference.

SUBJECT!

How to infuse Life, Earnestness, and Enthusiasm into a Parish.

"United we stand, divided we fall," is a maxim as applicable to our religious as to our civil institutions. Without unity in a congregation there can be no substantial religious progress. To be progressive, union and harmony are the first essentials, and wherever these exist, life, earnestness and enthusiasm will follow as natural results. They are the vine, and these the fruits thereof. In proportion as the vine is nurtured and cultivated, and pruned of all extraneous limbs and branches, the more abundant will be its fruits. Just so with a congregation. If they will cultivate, assiduously and earnestly among themselves, unity and harmony, lopping off all bickerings and contentions, all fault-finders and back biting, all captiousness and selfishness, and live in peace and charity with each other, that congregation will become not only peaceful and happy, but earnest and zealous in all church work—ever ready to give a helping hand to every undertaking that will advance the interest

of the church. This work will be performed too, not merely from a sense of duty, but with love and affection, from a knowledge of the great good resulting therefrom. Such a congregation will not only act together, but it will be ready and willing at all times, to co-operate heartily and zealously with its Pastor, to aid him in the performance of his multitudinous duties, both social and religious, and to contribute freely and cheerfully and liberally to his support. Wherever we find the Pastor and his flock in unity and harmony, working together for the advancement of the church, there life and earnestness will prevail, and all the other christian virtues also. This union and harmony should exist in the congregation not as a collective body only, but among its individual members, in their social relations. We are social beings. We have a natural desire to mingle in the society of our fellow creatures; and the gratification of this desire affords us the greatest possible enjoyments, and the greatest possible opportunities, both for the improvement of ourselves and our fellow beings. There is no factor more potent for the accomplishment of good, when properly exercised; and I have often thought that if many of the foolish conventionalisms of society were removed, and the intercourse between members of the same church was more free and easy, infinite good would result both to the church and to its individual members. I know of no influence more important in the building up of a church, and the establishing of those cordial and happy social relations that should exist between professing christians, than frequent social intercourse.

Good singing is also a most important factor in infusing life and enthusiasm into a Parish. The music, it seems to me, should be so selected that the whole congregation may join in it. What is more

enrapturing and soul-inspiring than a familiar hymn with a familiar air, when sung by the whole congregation with becoming spirit and animation! It strikes a sympathetic chord that vibrates through every heart, awakening and arousing all the better impulses of our being, and we are lifted up in thought and contemplation to a higher sense of our religious obligations.

The St. Andrew Brotherhood is doing and will continue to do much good, work for the church, infusing new life, by bringing church members to a better sense of their religious obligations, and by bringing into our fold those who have been strangers. Every possible aid and encouragement should be extended to the Brotherhood for the continued advancement of this good work.

The quarterly church Conferences are accomplishing more in awakening a deeper interest in the church, and stirring up the lukewarm and, indifferent to a proper appreciation of their religious duties than all other instrumentalities in the Conference. In some of the Parishes the effects have been, not only wonderful, but marvelous. In Parishes, in which church influences appeared irrevocably dormant, there has been an infusion of life and energy that the most sanguine could not have anticipated. Let us all therefore exert every effort, both of body and mind, for the continuance of the good work so auspiciously begun.

Another way in which life and enthusiasm may be infused into a Parish, is a proper treatment, a proper evidence of appreciation, and a proper manifestation of regard, for its Pastor. We expect too much of him, and we pay him too little for his services. The contributions should be amply sufficient for the support of himself and family, and to provide also against those contingencies to which all human

beings are heirs. A failure in this regard should be considered as a serious reflection upon the integrity of the Parish, and every effort should be exerted for its speedy removal. The sum promised, or contracted for, should be paid promptly—regularly. There should be no arrears. This is one of the very best evidencies of appreciation. If you don't believe it, you who are in arrears just try it one time; and if the next meeting with the Pastor does not evidence, on your part more cordiality, more real feeling and affection, a firmer and warmer grasp of the hand, and a conscience, not only void of offense, but now buoyed up with duty performed, then, I will ^{not} ~~fully~~ surrender all claims to prophecy. You will no longer take the other side of the street when you see him coming, but you will cross over to his side in order to greet him with a cheerful, hearty and affectionate God speed. He will return to his labors with new life, new energies, and a renewed spirit within him; and the whole Parish will catch the contagion. I know from experience whereof I speak.

The laymen should give the Pastor more assistance in the performance of his duties, and thus lighten his burdens, and afford him more time for contemplation and study and preparation of his sermons. This age is not only utilitarian, but remarkably progressive in all the arts and sciences, and in all polite literature as well. To keep fully abreast with the times, in all the branches of knowledge, is exceedingly important, both for the Pastor and his parishioners; and this assistance of the laymen, in the discharge of his manifold duties, will afford him much time for this purpose. No clergyman who is not fully up with the spirit of the age in these respects, can long command the regard of an intelligent audience. The laymen are, therefore, vitally interested in his advancement in knowledge, and should afford him

every facility for this purpose. But, the opinion seems to prevail among laymen, if their conduct is a just criterion, that their whole duty is performed when they attend services Sunday morning of each week. This is the sum and substance of their religious duty, together with the smallest possible contribution for the Pastor's support; and yet, to satisfy them, the Pastor must have a brand new sermon every Sunday morning; otherwise, he is dull and stupid, and has failed in the performance of his duty. I have often observed that those who contribute least to their Pastor's support, proportionate to their ability, are most urgent in their demands upon him, and censure, most severely and critically, any little remissness on his part. Is this right? Is it just? Is it charitable? Is it "dealing with our neighbor as we would have him deal with us?" Can such a parish prosper? Can life, earnestness and enthusiasm be infused into it while in this state of mind? For this purpose I would suggest a careful study of church history—the reasons for being churchmen—a more hearty participation in the services—making the responses distinctly and audibly, and more reverence and devotion in worshiping. These duties faithfully performed will generate a deeper interest in the services, and they will ultimately become grand and beautiful.

In some of our churches the congregation does not worship with the earnestness and sincerity that should characterize Christians. There is a want of reverence and a levity, not only inexcusable, but reprehensible. I have seen conduct in church that would neither be attempted, nor tolerated in a private parlor. Had these participants more regard for a mere human being, than for God himself? for a private house than for one consecrated to the services of the Almighty? Had they forgot-

ten that grand and sublime introduction to the Morning Prayer, "The Lord is in his holy temple!" Had they forgotten, also, the righteous indignation with which Christ cleansed the Jewish temple of those who were profaning it; and, that at no time in his whole ministry, did he display so much energy, and so much holy wrath. If the conduct of the Jews excited such holy wrath and indignation, what must be the measure of that wrath when professed christians are irreverent in His church, and are apparently oblivious that "He is in his holy temple." Will they attempt to excuse themselves by saying, they were not dealing in merchandise as were the Jews? Are these not those who carry with them into the church to-day, thoughts of their merchandise, their lands, their money, and all their worldly possessions? They who have enjoyed opportunities and privileges for religious improvement never vouchsafed to the Jews? While in church we should have in constant remembrance the words of Solomon by the Holy Ghost, "Keep thy foot when thou goest into the house of God."

This levity and irreverence in church is not premeditated, but the result of a want of thought and reflection—of carelessness and indifference. Now, it seems to me, a proper participation in, and a proper appreciation of, the services, would remove these evils—would lead our thoughts to higher and nobler themes—make our conduct more devotional, and more in keeping with our highest duties as christian believers; and then that which to the thoughtless and inattentive, may have appeared dull and monotonous, will become beautiful and sublime.

In the whole English language there is no production, for beauty of language, for elegance of expression, and for sublimity of thought, comparable to our liturgy. It

has been pronounced even by eminent Methodist and Presbyterian divines, "as the most wonderful production of the Reformation, next to the translation of the Bible." If it has such attractions to those of other denominations, should it not be more interesting and attractive—more beautiful and sublime to professed churchmen, whose glory it is, consecrated by the Apostles, and transmitted in its full integrity to us—apostolic, historic, continuous, venerable for its antiquity, and venerated for its sacred and hallowed truths. From the days of the Apostles to the present, through all the ages, through all the mutations of time, through tribulations and trials, through persecutions and martyrdoms, it has stood steadfastly, the same Catholic and Apostolic church, teaching Baptism; the Doctrines of the Apostles; the Fellowship of the Apostles; the Breaking of Bread; and the Prayers. And thus she will continue, to the end of time, steadfastly to teach and to spread these precious and immutable truths. To-day her future is brighter than ever before. Within the last decade her increase has exceeded all former times. She is the church of the Anglo Saxon—the English speaking race—the dominant race of mankind—who are controlling, and who will continue to control, the destinies of the world. Wherever this race obtains a foothold, there an Anglo Catholic chapel is reared, its spire and its cross pointing the enquirer to the true way to the land of peace and of rest; and there it will steadfastly remain, as this race has never surrendered territory once in its possession. To the Anglo Catholic church, the Anglo Saxon is more deeply indebted for his supremacy and his grand achievements, than to all other influences combined. Their destiny is united and indissoluble.

*With the kind regards of its author,
J. C. [illegible]*